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AN EARNEST

INVITATION

K *England - Church of England*
TO THE *Appendix*

FRIENDS OF THE ESTABLISHED CHURCH

TO JOIN,

With several of their Brethren, Clergy and Laity,
in *London*, in setting apart one Hour of every
Week, for Prayer and Supplication, during the
present troublesome Times.

Call upon me in the Day of Trouble,
I will deliver thee, and thou shalt
glorify me. PSALM l. 15.

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P R E F A C E.

1. *I*N the beginning of the last war Providence seemed to take part with our enemies. We wanted unanimity in our public councils, and success in our public measures. One miscarriage followed another. Our national courage ceased to exert itself, and a general dejection of spirits ensued. At this time several clergymen of the established church agreed to meet at the throne of grace on the Lord's-day. The subject of their joint prayers was to ask the blessing of God upon our public councils, our fleets, and our armies. They were soon joined by a great number of the laity in most parts of the kingdom. Afterwards several praying societies were formed for the same purpose in Germany, and especially in Hanover. In the spirit of prayer and supplication they humbled themselves before the Lord: they sought success at his hands, and he was gracious to their requests; he sent victory after victory, until our enemies were willing to be at peace, and then they gave him unfeigned thanks, and ascribed all the glory to his goodness and power.

2. The principles upon which they then acted were these. They believed in the being of God, the Lord and Maker of all worlds. They

acknowledged his Providence over his works; for he doeth according to his will in the army of heaven, and among the inhabitants of the earth. His kingdom ruleth over all, every person and every thing; And none can stay his hand, or say unto him, What doest thou?

3. They believed also, that in the course of his Providence, he acts by an infinitely wise rule, which he has made known to us in the holy scriptures. He is the almighty Creator, and sovereign Lord of mankind, and he has given them a law, which is holy, just, and good. Every tittle of it is not only for his glory, but also for their profit. He has secured obedience to it by promises and threatenings, neither of which can fail. His word cannot be broken, either to the obedient or disobedient. According to his revealed will his love infallibly follows the one, and his justice the other.

4. This is true of societies, as well as of private persons. Sin is alike the transgression of the law, and deserves in many or in few the threatened punishment; but according to the number, it becomes more poisonous: because it spreads its infection by example. When the multitude agree to do evil, the restraint of shame is taken off. If the times should favor them through much luxury, and great licentiousness, they harden one another in sin. Then general dissipation and false pleasure take possession of the heart. These hinder the mind from being cultivated with any profitable knowledge. The sound principles of religion become neglected,

neglected, and as these grow out of fashion, immoral practices must prevail. The authority of God is cast off: his word, his sabbaths, his ordinances, are first disused, and then by degrees despised. Thus infidelity gets deeper root, and immorality, which is its natural fruit, become luxuriant. The restraint of the divine law being taken away, human laws lose their force upon the conscience: for when the fear of God is gone, there is no motive left sufficient to influence the heart or conduct; men will then venture to sin without any sense of danger, even of death itself. And when national sin is come to this height, God has declared in his word, and by the constant course of his providence has made it manifest, that he will interpose to maintain the honour of his law and government. When men have thus deeply corrupted themselves, he will remember their iniquity, he will visit their sins: "Shall I not visit for these things, saith the Lord, shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?"

5. When God arises to vindicate his authority, he is never at a loss for means. All creatures are ready to execute his judgments, which are the more fearful, because in his hands, irresistible. Among them war is one of the most severe and desolating: it is one of the sore visitations of God, as Ezek. xiv. 21. which does not come by chance, but by his command: and he sends it, Amos ix. 4. to plead his controversy. It is the just appointment of

his providence to vindicate his broken law, and his despised government. It is his wise interposition, either to correct for those things, or to destroy. When it is the loving rod of correction, it humbles: it brings the sinner upon his knees; he repents, he turns from the error of his ways, and is reformed by the visitation. When it comes to punish, he gives warning before the blow; but the people sin on, they fear not the sword, nor him who sent it: then it vindicates the righteous quarrel of the Lord upon impenitent sinners. It strikes at every thing truly valuable, liberty, property, yea life itself. This scourge is now sent, and felt; sent by the divine Providence, and felt, yea sorely complained of, but not as it should be; not with submission to the justice of the visitation, but with murmuring; not with turning from sin, but with returning to it with more hardness and greater greediness.

6. This was our situation when we entered upon the war in 1756. Considering ourselves as Christian ministers, we saw our duty, and what part it became us to act, as good citizens. We had read the promises of God made to those, who at such times seek his help, and implore his blessing. We had seen those promises fulfilled: we in earnest pursued the means of his own appointing, and we met with the desired end: he humbled us at his footstool; we asked pardon for our national departure from the living God; we implored his mercy through Christ;

Christ; and he heard prayer, he answered prayer, and we glorified him.

7. The use of the same means is now again recommended; (Dec. 1778,) the same occasion calls for it, and we have the same encouragement. The promises, and the examples in scripture, warrant us to expect the same success. May the Spirit of grace and supplication be poured out abundantly upon ministers, and people, that multitudes may use the means, until God send us a blessed issue: yea, may he turn to us in mercy, and turn us as a people unto himself, with repentance and faith. The cloud may be dark which hangs over our heads; it may threaten a destroying storm; it may spread blacker, and look more dreadful: yet prayer can pierce through the cloud; the prayer of faith can gain admittance into his presence, who has his way in the whirlwind, and who presides over the storm. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous was heard; the cloud was dispersed, and the face of the heavens again serene and peaceful. O for another army of such supplicants! What cannot they do! calling for, and trusting to, the help of the Almighty? This is our spiritual armour, and more useful than the arm of flesh: may as many use the one, as use the other. And now the host is gone forth against the enemy, may we at home follow them and aid them with our prayers, never ceasing, until God restore peace to the earth, and good will between us and all our public enemies.

The following little tract was made very useful in all the former wars from the year 1756, and has gone through a great number of editions. I have been called upon by some persons, on whose judgment I depend, to reprint it; in hopes the same blessing may attend it. How greatly is it to be wished, that it may stir up thousands to humble themselves under the mighty hand of God, and to seek his help in this time of need. If we do it in earnest, we need not despair. The same means will bring about the same end. May we use the means, and pray on, till God shall hear and answer.

An earnest Invitation, &c.

My Christian Brother,

GOD has declared, that when a land sins against him by trespassing grievously, then he will stretch out his hand upon it, and visit it with his four fore judgments, the sword, the famine, the noisome beast, and the pestilence. These he sends to punish the land for its grievous trespasses. He has visited us with some of his sore judgments, and therefore our land has trespassed grievously. And if we continue to provoke him, and refuse to receive correction, he will continue these punishments; and it is to be feared, if we remain hardened and impenitent under them, he will at last give us over to the destroyer.

The present circumstances of our public affairs are exceedingly awful and alarming. Our danger is confessedly great. Our enemies are many and mighty, and our numerous sins are in their interest. Every sin helps them to destroy us; and God has been thus far on our enemies side. - He has been by them punishing our sins, and yet with a strange infatuation we sin on securely, as if we did not apprehend, that continuance in sin would certainly cause the continuance of our calamities. And dreadful it is to see how ineffectual all the former judgments have been to reform us. Still our people refuse to deny themselves their diversions and

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their vices. And the season of the year is come, when without any reformation at home, we are going to send out our fleets and armies against our enemies abroad, vainly flattering ourselves with hopes of success, while our sins set God at defiance, and make him continue to fight against us with his almighty power.

If then our people have not been reclaimed by past judgments, and consequently greater must be expected. What is to be done? What can true believers do, but use their interest with God in prayer? we have no other expedient left. If our people won't plead with God for themselves, let us plead for them. Our encouragement is great; we have many sweet promises in scripture to rely upon. There is one in *Solomon's* prayer which suits our case exactly (2 *Chron.* vi. 24, 25,) "And if thy people *Israel* be put to the worse before the enemy, because they have sinned against thee, and shall return and confess thy name, and pray, and make supplication before thee in this house, then hear thou from the heavens, and forgive the sins of thy people." There never was an instance wherein God acted contrary to the method here mentioned. Whenever a people turned to him and confessed their sins, he turned away from his fierce anger. If they called upon him in the day of trouble, he heard and answered. If they put their trust in him, he maintained their cause.

Several ministers of the established church from the consideration of our danger, and seeing no remedy more effectual than prayer and supplication,

lication, have resolved to spend part of every Lord's-Day in this holy exercise. They have chosen this day, partly for the sake of the day itself, being a day sacred to religion, and because they wanted to have the joint prayers of those persons, who might be hindered on other days, but who were now entirely free from worldly avocations: and they have chosen to spend from eight to nine o'clock in the evening, because it is the time that could be best spared from the duties of the day, and because after attending upon public worship, the mind would be better disposed for private worship—prayer and the word and the sacraments having put the soul into a proper frame to humble itself before God, first for its own sins, and then for the sins of the nation. We earnestly request our brethren of the established church, and all our fellow-Christians to join with us in this religious design. It is a reasonable, and a pious request that we make: and we hope no person, who has the spirit of prayer, and who is a lover of the protestant religion, and of our establishment, will be prevented by any slothful or needless excuse, from offering up his petitions along with ours at the appointed hour; but that all the faithful servants of God in every part of the land will be at the same time, as one congregation, presenting their prayers before the throne of grace. Oh how much to be desired, how good and joyful a thing would it be, to see brethren thus praying together in unity. May God put it into the hearts both of ministers and people thus to pray in sweet agree-

ment, at one time, and with one heart, until God hear and answer, and deliver this church and kingdom out of their dangers and troubles.

The first part of the duty, which is incumbent upon us at this time, consists in humbling ourselves before God, under a deep sense of those sins which have provoked him to send down so many heavy judgments upon our land, in confessing those sins with a godly sorrow, and in turning from them with a repentance not to be repented of. And that we may all be stirred up to a due discharge of this duty, we should be fully persuaded that our public calamities come from our sins. God is angry at nothing but sin. Every man therefore should look into his own heart, and see what great reason God has to be angry with him, and accordingly to humble himself under the mighty hand of God, that he may pardon him and exalt him in due time.

Let each of us then at the appointed hour retire from the world, and in the presence, and before the footstool of the sovereign Creator and Redeemer, examine what grounds and reasons we have for deep humiliation. And

First, We have great reason to mourn and be afflicted before him for the sinfulness of our nature, which is the fruitful parent of all our actual sins. We have corrupted ourselves in every faculty of soul and body; and the sight and feeling of this corruption should give us the most humbling views of our sinful, lost, and helpless condition: for by this fault and corruption of nature, every man naturally engendered of the
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offspring of *Adam* is not only far gone from original righteousness, and of his own nature inclined to evil, so that the flesh lusteth always contrary to the spirit, but also deserveth God's wrath and damnation. How can we believe ourselves to be thus conceived and born in sin, thus by nature the children of God's wrath, and not be deeply humbled? What can be matter of greater humiliation, than to consider how low we are fallen, that we have lost original righteousness, have lost the image of God, have lost his love, and favour, and grace, and have lost all hope, as to any thing we can do, of his glory? Let us then begin with lamenting the sinfulness of our nature, which is the fountain of all sin. Let us beg of God to cleanse it by the blood of Jesus, and to renew us daily by the grace of the Holy Spirit, that we may put off the sinful nature, the old man with his deeds, and may put on the new man which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness.

Secondly, We have great reason to be humbled for the sinfulness of our lives. God requires nothing of us, but what is for his glory, and for our happiness. His law is holy, just, and good; but how often have we broken it, in thought, word, and deed—how presumptuously—after how many solemn vows and resolutions—against the light of conscience—against the light of the gospel—ungratefully, after receiving numerous mercies—hardened in sin, after being visited with heavy judgments? Who amongst us is not deep in guilt in these

these respects? Let us look back upon our past lives, and remember, wherein we have particularly offended. Let us recollect our sins of commission against God's holy law, and our sins of omission, with the aggravating circumstances attending them; and then, considering how injurious the least of these things was to the glory of God, let us be humbled to the very dust: For the scripture is clear, and express, "that we
 " have all sinned and come short of the glory
 " of God," we have robbed him of his glory. Now it is our duty, as Christians, to live to the glory of God, and to have a single eye to his glory, even in the common affairs of life, when we eat or drink, or whatever we do. Have we then at all times, and in all things, had a single eye to God's glory? Oh guilty, guilty, must we all plead to this charge; with shame and confusion of face must we confess, that we have not spent all our lives to God's glory! seldom have we had an eye to it; and when we had, very rarely have we indeed promoted it. And after we have thus taken an humbling view of our sinful nature, and of our sinful lives.

Thirdly, Let the consideration of our national wickedness humble us still lower before God. Christianity is the religion professed in this country. Ours is a reformed church. We are a free people. God continues to us the light of his gospel. We have his word and his ordinances, and all the blessings of the establishment. We are highly favoured above all the nations on the earth. Now to whom much is
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given, of them men always require the more and so does God. He requires more of the professors of Christianity, than of the ignorant heathen. But do we make him more returns of love and obedience, than they do? Look around the kingdom, and judge. You will find in several parts of this land, as great ignorance of the life and power of Christianity, as in the deserts of *Africa*. What distant corner of the kingdom has not heard the blaspheming tongue speaking treason against God our Saviour? And where is the happy village free from open and scandalous immoralities? Here is our condemnation, that light is come into the world, and shines among us, and yet we love darkness rather than light. This makes our sins exceeding sinful, that Christ came to destroy the works of the devil, and yet they abound among us. To repeat these works by name would be tiresome; to aggravate them is impossible. Open your eyes, you see them covering our land like a deluge. Open your ears, you can scarce hear any thing, but cursing, lying, and evil speaking. Go where you will, you meet with sin at noon day. It has thrown off restraint, and is not afraid to appear without a mask. Yea, sins abominable to nature are heard of in our land, and there are too many men among us, who refuse to believe, that God ever rained down fire and brimstone from heaven, and miraculously destroyed certain horrible monsters of sin. Stop, and consider, whether these things be so. If they be, have we not
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great reason for humiliation? Ought we not to be humbled for our national wickedness, and still more humbled, for that having so many means of reformation, graciously vouchsafed to us, we not only continue wicked, but also are hardened, and thereby grow worse and worse.

While we are thus mourning for the wickedness of our people, let us never forget, that we ourselves are part of the people, and that our sinfulness has made a large addition to the national guilt. Let us never lose sight of this consideration, lest we should find matter for censoriousness, where we only want matter of humiliation. The sight of our sins, as part of the sins of the nation, will serve to keep us in a proper frame to profit from the

Fourth humbling circumstance we have to mention, namely, that God is now visiting us for our public sins. This is the scope and design of his present judgments, and shall we not be humbled under his almighty hand? He has shewn himself offended at our sins, and has chastised us for them as a nation. Hereby he would teach us this useful lesson, that we should turn to him with a national repentance, if we hope to be pardoned and saved. If we now humble ourselves before him, his former chastisements will be turned into blessings: But if after being often chastised, we refuse to glorify him by our humiliation, he will certainly be glorified in our destruction. If the rod of his mercy does not humble us, the scourge of his justice shall destroy us. Humbled we have not
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been by any of God's past judgments, therefore we have reason to fear greater: for if being chastised for sin, we nevertheless will not leave it, what can we expect, but to be cut off in our sins? This has been the constant method of God's providence, in his dealings with private persons, as well as with public communities. Fearful is that sentence which is already gone out of the Lord's mouth—Oh that it may strike fear into every careless sinner, who hears it, “He that being often reprov'd, hardeneth his neck, shall suddenly be destroyed, and that without remedy.” *Prov. xxix. 1.* We have often been reprov'd, and yet we have hardened our necks, what then should hinder sudden destruction from coming upon us, and that without remedy? Let this awful consideration stir us up to plead earnestly with God for the hardness of the people's hearts. Let us be deeply humbled for those obstinate sinners, who refuse to be humbled for themselves, and let us beg of God to spare them. Spare thy people, O Lord, spare them, and give not thine heritage over to reproach.

Let us lay all these things together, and see whether there be not matter enough for the deepest humiliation. We are altogether sinful in nature, sinful in life, a country professing Christianity, and yet abounding with sin, and hardened in it at this very time, when God is chastising and punishing us for our sins. He has given us, during this unsuccessful war, some severe chastisements, but they have not brought
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us to a right sense of ourselves, and therefore we may expect they will be more severe. God has shewn us plainly, that he is not on our side, and we have felt his displeasure, but we are not humbled under it. Without humiliation he will continue to fight against us, and what calamity is there so great, which we may not then justly apprehend? What success can we hope from our fleets and armies, if the Almighty go out against them? What is our security as an island, if he put it into the hearts of our enemies, and if he come with them, to invade us? In this case how exceedingly should we be alarmed to think, that our sins may provoke God to join with our enemies, and to give them success. Every thing dear and valuable to *Englishmen* and protestants would then be lost. Heathenism and slavery would get possession of our religion and liberties. While God threatens us with these calamities, he gives us time to pray against them. While they are at a distance prayer is our weapon, and God seems now to put it into our hands. O that we may use it aright to his glory, and to the preservation of this church and kingdom.

My Christian brother, after you have weighed these things attentively, judge whether it be not a seasonable and a safe measure, which we would persuade you to take. And you will take it, if you are indeed a friend to our present happy establishment in church and state. Your love for them will put you upon doing every thing that lays in your power to serve them ;

them; and here you have a fair opportunity, which if you make use of, it cannot but do you service, and may be a blessing to them. Pray for them at the appointed hour. Determine through God's assistance, that nothing shall hinder you from joining us. Break through all engagements, all hindrances to meet the Lord's people at the throne of grace. And for your encouragement remember, that he who sitteth upon the throne is the God who heareth prayer, and who has invited you to call upon him in the day of trouble: So will I hear thee, says he, and thou shalt glorify me.

If it has pleased God to put it into the heart of any person who reads these few lines, to make part of this praying congregation, and he is at a loss to know particularly what he should ask of God; let him first beg of the father of mercies to give him the spirit of prayer and supplication, that he may offer up his petitions acceptably through Jesus Christ our Lord. And then let him request the grace of humiliation, that he may be truly and deeply affected with the four particulars before mentioned. Let him pray to God to give him still more humbling views of his sinful nature, and to bring to his remembrance his sinful life, with the sinfulness of his sins, that seeing himself to be nothing but vile and sinful dust and ashes, he may be disposed to mourn for his own sins, and then for the crying sins of this guilty land, and for the hardness and impenitency of our people's hearts, upon which the heavy judgments of God have

as yet made no impression. And then let him implore mercy first for himself, and afterwards for the nation, through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. Earnestly let him plead with the Father, that for the sake of his dear Son he would give us grace to turn from our sins by true repentance, that iniquity may not be our ruin. And although the past judgments have not reclaimed us, yet let him pray the more fervently for the gift of the Holy Spirit, that his grace may be poured out abundantly upon us to shew us the error of our ways, and to revive the spirit and power of Christianity, that we may receive Christ Jesus the Lord as our Saviour, by the merits of whose most precious blood we may be saved from the guilt and punishment of sin, and by whose almighty grace we may also be saved from the dominion of sin, that being thus delivered by him from the hands of our enemies, we may serve God without fear, in holiness and righteousness before him all the days of our life.

In these our requests let us never forget to pray for the preservation of the protestant church, and all its members throughout Europe, and especially for the peace of our established church, and for all orders and degrees of its ministers, beseeching God to give them his grace and heavenly benediction, that both by their life and doctrine they may set forth his glory, and set forward the salvation of all men. And to the end there may never be wanting such persons in the church, let us pray
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for all seminaries of Christian education, especially for the two Universities. May the Spirit of wisdom preside over them, and water them with the dew of his heavenly grace, that the youth educated in them may come forth to the work of the Lord fitted with all proper graces as well as gifts. And since the harvest is now great, may the Lord of the harvest send forth more of his own labourers.

May the God of love dispose us also to pray fervently for all the protestant dissenting congregations, which love the Lord Jesus in sincerity. May he shed that love abroad in all our souls, which alone can effectually free us from party spirit. And may he thus reconcile our hearts to them, and theirs to us. Oh that we may see an end of those bitter disputes, which have so long disturbed the peace, and hindered the union of protestants: and may there be only this one holy contention between us, whether the ministers out of the establishment, or we in it, shall labour most for the glory of our common Lord, and for the salvation of those souls for whom he shed his blood.

And as the hearts of kings are in the hand of God, we must pray him to direct the heart of our gracious sovereign lord king *George*, to do what will be for the glory of God, and for the good of his people, beseeching the Almighty to enrich him with every temporal, and with every spiritual blessing, until he place upon his head a crown of eternal glory.

Let us also pray for the queen, for the prince
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of *Wales*, and for all the royal family, that God would endue them with his Holy Spirit, and enrich them with his heavenly grace, that he would prosper them with all happiness, and bring them to his everlasting kingdom.

And let us desire the spirit of wisdom to direct both houses of parliament, all the king's counsellors, and judges, and all the magistrates throughout the kingdom, and to enable them faithfully to discharge the great trust reposed in them, for the punishment of wickedness and vice, and for the maintenance of God's true religion and virtue.

Let us beg of God now to go forth with our fleets and armies, and to give them success against our enemies in this war, in which we are engaged. And let us pray him to bless our officers, and soldiers, and sailors, and to protect them in all dangers, and to cover their heads in the day of battle. And let us earnestly and heartily pray for their reformation, and also for a reformation at home, without which we cannot expect success from our arms abroad. May the Spirit of the living God work upon the hardened hearts of our people, and soften them by his grace, that they may see the error of their ways, and cry for mercy before it be too late, and may they find it through the atoning blood of the Lamb of God. Oh that there may be a general turning to the Lord, and may our eyes live to see it. Amen. So be it, Lord Jesus.

These short hints may be enlarged and improved, as time and occasion shall offer. My

Christian brother, may the Spirit of the living God direct thee, how to enlarge and to improve them. And after thou hast once begun, and hast spent some evenings of the Lord's day in this devout exercise, be upon thy guard, lest thou shouldst be tempted to leave it off. Never be tired of such a good work. Pray for the spirit of grace and supplication, and carry thy prayers into practice. The more thou prayest, the more will God make thee joyful in the exercise of prayer. Go on in his strength, and persevere. Hold on thy suit, and wait upon the Lord our God, until he have mercy upon us. Be not weary of joining with us, and in God's due time thou hast his promise, "thou shalt reap, if thou faint not." Lord, grant none of us, who set out well, may faint, until we who sow our prayers, and they who reap the fruit of them, may rejoice together, here in the peace and reformation of our land, and hereafter through Jesus Christ our Lord in eternal glory. Amen.

THE END.

